



**For immediate release**

July 16, 2008

**Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau and Chamber Announce Results of  
Convention Center Feasibility Study**

*Consultant believes the area could support up to 140,000-square-foot facility*

**[Fox Cities]** – The Fox Cities could support a convention center, and that center could generate between \$7.6 and \$8.4 million in new economic impact annually in the Fox Cities, according to a consultant who recently completed a feasibility study.

“Our analysis indicates that market demand exists for new convention space development in the community,” commented Bill Krueger, Director of Conventions, Sports & Leisure International (CSL). “For a market its size, the Fox Cities has a relatively strong array of amenities, attractions and infrastructure that appeal to many state and regional groups. The results of a large telephone survey of meeting planners supports this, as interest levels for the Fox Cities destination were higher than a number of similar surveys conducted in recent years in comparable markets by our company.”

The Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau and Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry contracted CSL of Wayzata, Minnesota to conduct the study. The project was overseen by a task force that included Bill Welch, President and CEO of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Lynn Peters, Executive Director of the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau and 11 other community leaders.

The study included: an analysis of existing market conditions and comparable and competitive facilities, interviews and focus groups with local leaders and meeting planners who might use the facility, a review and rating of potential locations using a site analysis matrix, financial analysis of construction and operations costs, and an economic impact assessment.

“We now have a wealth of information on the market potential for a convention center, the ideal size of a convention center for this market and potential locations and the associated construction costs for each location,” commented Welch.

“The Bureau, the Chamber and community leaders will need to consider all the information in the study before any decision to pursue or not pursue a convention center will be made,” said Peters.

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## Fox Cities Convention Center Feasibility Study Results, add 1

Telephone interviews were completed with 100 planners of state and regional groups with rotating conventions, conferences and tradeshow. Results of these interviews and the overall market demand analysis suggest that a supportable facility in the community would have a footprint somewhere between 114,000 and 140,000 square feet, as well as space for parking, loading, ingress and egress, and an inventory of convention-quality hotel rooms within close proximity.

Eleven different locations throughout the Fox Cities were evaluated in the study. Each location was ranked on several different factors including: hotel availability, infrastructure and site condition, adjacent restaurants and attractions, shopping, compatibility with the neighborhood, and economic development potential. Using this ranking system, locations in Downtown Appleton and Grand Chute stood out as the preferred locations amongst the reviewed set. Locations in outlying areas of Appleton, the Town of Menasha, Downtown Neenah and Heart of the Valley ranked lower.

The study includes preliminary, order-of-magnitude construction cost estimates for a number of different development scenarios, and they range from \$25 to \$45 million.

Total tourism expenditures in the Fox Cities were more than \$386 million, and tourism created 5,949 jobs for Fox Cities residents in 2007.

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### **About the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

The Fox Cities Chamber is the largest business association in Northeast Wisconsin. The Chamber's mission is to foster prosperity for its members and the community by creating a positive economic, political and social climate. The work of the Chamber is underwritten by its more than 1700 member companies. Support for the aforementioned study will be provided by the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce & Industry Foundation, a charitable support group for the Chamber.

### **About the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau**

The Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau is an economic development organization that strengthens the Fox Cities by attracting visitors in the convention, sports and leisure markets through sales, marketing and destination development.

### **For more information contact:**

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## **Fox Cities Convention Center Feasibility Study FAQ**

### **Does this announcement mean that the Bureau and Chamber are recommending construction of a convention center in the Fox Cities?**

No. This feasibility study gives us a wealth of information on:

1. Whether the community could sustain a convention center
2. The market potential for additional conventions and meetings a convention center would bring
3. The ideal size of a convention center for this market
4. Potential locations and the associated costs for a convention center
5. Funding options

The Bureau, the Chamber and community leaders will need to consider all the information in the study before any decision to pursue or not pursue a convention center will be made.

### **Who paid for the study?**

The Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau shared the cost of the study.

### **Who conducted the study?**

Conventions, Sports and Leisure International (CSL) of Wayzata, MN conducted the study. The study was overseen by a task force that included Bill Welch, President and CEO of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Lynn Peters, Executive Director of the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau and 11 other community leaders.

### **How was the information gathered for the study?**

The study was done in two phases: Phase 1 included interviews with local stakeholders, an analysis of the local market conditions and regional trends, analysis of competitive and comparable facilities, and telephone surveys with 100 meeting planners.

Phase II included an analysis of event and use levels, assessment of building program, potential construction and operating costs, estimation of economic impacts and evaluation of 11 different potential sites throughout the Fox Cities.

### **What size and type of facility would be best suited to the Fox Cities?**

Telephone interviews were completed with 100 planners of state and regional groups with rotating conventions, conferences and tradeshows. Results of these interviews and the overall market demand analysis suggest that a supportable facility in the community would have a footprint somewhere between 114,000 and 140,000 square feet, as well as space for parking, loading, ingress and egress, and an inventory of convention-quality hotel rooms within close proximity.

**What would the economic impact of the convention center be?**

The study estimates the center could generate between \$7.6 and \$8.4 million in new economic impact annually in the Fox Cities.

**Where could the convention center be located?**

Eleven different locations throughout the Fox Cities were evaluated in the study. Each location was ranked on several different factors including: hotel availability, infrastructure and site condition, adjacent restaurants and attractions, shopping, compatibility with the neighborhood, and economic development potential. Using this ranking system, locations in Downtown Appleton and Grand Chute stood out as the preferred locations amongst the reviewed set. Locations in outlying areas of Appleton, the Town of Menasha, Downtown Neenah and Heart of the Valley ranked lower.

**How will the convention center be paid for?**

Since we are not building a convention center at this point, it is impossible to answer this question. The study provides ballpark costs and lists a number of traditional funding options for convention centers.

The study includes preliminary, order-of-magnitude construction cost estimates for a number of different development scenarios, and they range from \$25 to \$45 million.

**So, now what?**

The study contains a significant amount of data that the Chamber, Bureau and community leaders need to digest and analyze before any decisions are made on next steps. The Bureau and Chamber plan to discuss this study more in-depth with community leaders in the coming months.